The purest religion of any age lies in the hands of its spiritual rebels. The twentieth century is no exception. —COLIN WILSON

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THE WORLD'S GREAT AGE

NOTHING can take place in the Kali Yuga that did not exist in seed—or privation—in the other great Ages. What on higher planes is lack or undifferentiated potentiality becomes, during Kali Yuga, the confrontation of unlearned lessons, the inescapable continuation of lines of causation begun long ago. It is a time of summing up, of completion, of reaching a final equilibrium—and, therefore, of ultimate decision.

In Kali Yuga, the brakes on the fulfillment of Karma dissolve with the ripening of effects. Of the hero is exacted the last jot and tittle of the heroic role, and the slave must drink each drop in the bitter draft of self-abdication. Nothing is held back, nothing put over, nothing left unresolved—within the depth and measure of the cycle. Siva rules first as Kali the Destroyer, and is then reborn as Rudra, the Regenerator. It is a time of spreading death and fertile beginnings. For human beings, it is the furnace of their common life, made manifest before their eyes.

In Kali Yuga, by the constraints of time matured, men learn their true names and their destiny. The gods have to rebecome gods, while the demonic makes a heyday of its final innings. The lukewarm must go their ignominious path, since the intermediate places of hiding no longer exist. The optimisms of "muddling through," the hopeful ignorance of compromise, the waiting for the help of "divine intervention"—all these delaying actions of the personal nature at last prove useless in Kali Yuga. The plaintive excuse, the

false defeat of passion browbeaten by remorse, the secret citadels of lingering egotism, the sly devices of the inveterate manipulator—these have to disappear along with the petulance of the hangers-on, the injured innocence of those who thought loyalty to persons could serve for cleaving to principle. Stark travail has turned every natural process, every nexus of causation, into midwives of viable rebirth. Life, in its own behalf, becomes a hurricane of cleansing attendants. The world learns at first hand the thrill of both agony and ecstasy.

Yet, in the midst of it all, time drags. The cosmic laziness of matter clinging to its native forms supports the brittle shape of outworn institutions. The choices of men to be free come reluctantly. Our awakening to what we must do lags with vain allegiance to old securities. Petty pace was not spoken only of marching futility. We have had procrastination on this planet since the very beginning of things.

Nonetheless, human beings are making up their minds, and the balance of the age will be affected, although, for a time, it may whirl first this way, then that. One day we shall see the effect of all those choices, like tiny lights coming up, one by one, on an enormous board. The gloom we feel is not in the soul. The persistence we practice no matter how we feel is not of the body. The roots of the future lie deep in the hearts of mankind, and they draw on a nourishment that has brought whole universes into being, since time was not. In a time of hidden growth, the waiting can be borne. It is a waiting for those increments of dawning self-knowledge which come by their own energy and at their own mysterious times. We wait upon others, who wait, perchance, upon ourselves.

THE CULTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

IN Theosophical literature the nature and action of mind, its gift by higher beings to the mindless man, and its subsequent development in the human races, receive ample coverage. This is also true of the structure and formation of the brain, the physical instrument of mind. But to fathom the illusive depths of consciousness is a test of the power to apply the teachings to oneself, to feel inwardly the voice of countless ages past, and to look forward to similar ages to come. The true culture of consciousness is a longing to come nearer to its source, knowing that the finite mind, the present vehicle for our conscious life in a body, must change in order to attain greater realization. But to begin the study we must turn to *The Secret Doctrine,* which has much that is poignant and living on our subject.

That consciousness and thought-processes were held to be the by-product of molecular motion, at the height of the nineteenth-century materialism, now only emphasizes the lack of a better solution from scientific quarters during the twentieth century's spectacular progress. The electric waves of the brain have been measured, and dreams and sleep have lost some of their mystery under controlled research and investigation. The subconscious, with its hidden causes and their effects upon thought and action, has given rise to an extensive psychiatric literature. But there remains the mystery of that consciousness which is inherent throughout great nature, culminating in the self-consciousness of man. The dictionaries of today give this subject little more attention than to state that it is the thoughts and feelings collectively of an individual or aggregate of people.

One may ask, however, which comes first, consciousness or ideation? Such a question may be best answered by an analogy. Is, for instance, the door more important than the house? The door is only an entry, while the house absorbs a large share of our time and money. But unless we open the door and go into the house, we have only titular ownership. So with avenues of consciousness, which

give entry to all experience, both inner and outer. Without its all-pervading presence the soul would be deprived of its perceptive powers, life itself would be thwarted, and evolution impossible.

To enter our metaphysical door let us turn to the First Fundamental of *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 15) and ponder two quotations:

"Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter are, however, to be regarded, not as independent realities, but as the two facets or aspects of the Absolute (Parabrahm), which constitute the basis of conditioned Being whether subjective or objective."

"Just as pre-Cosmic Ideation is the root of all individual consciousness, so pre-Cosmic Substance is the substratum of matter in the various grades of its differentiation."

This leaves no doubt as to the origin of our perceptive power, for the consciousness of each living creature is witness to the earliest awakening of the great manvantara when spirit and matter manifested as aspects of the Absolute. The advantage of following the occult teachings rests upon their ability to reveal the source of conscious life, thus assuring us of a true basis for study, and preventing our loss in a labyrinth of speculation concerning "causation." It is important, therefore, to remember that the teachings are given "from our plane of consciousness." And it is important, also, to bear in mind that consciousness and substance (the builder of matter) on our plane are not independent of each other, and consequently a study of the vehicle is important. "It is only through a vehicle of matter that consciousness wells up as 'I am I,' a physical basis being necessary to focus a ray of the Universal Mind at a certain stage of complexity" (*S.D.* I, 15).

The thought field is magnetic and electric and attracts that which is homogeneous with its own nature. Because of this process, both physical and metaphysical, the brain and other organs of the body impress their characteristics upon the countless infinitesimal lives of which they are formed, and as these lives (creating atomic and molecular structure) possess their own degree of consciousness, and therefore memory, it is important that the mind should rule wisely over this vast kingdom. The body is the mind's access to great nature, and nature is dependent upon the human race to raise matter to the self-conscious level. But man has ignored his close relationship and duty toward nature and in so doing brought upon himself countless disastrous reactions, some of which he labels "acts of

God." He considers himself a sinner and prays for forgiveness and salvation, but, forgiven or not, he has to suffer the effects of the causes which he has recorded indelibly upon matter. Not only that which is specifically labeled as sin causes his many frustrations. He has to learn that nature has its own laws pertaining to its material, psychic, and spiritual principles. These laws man breaks through ignorance, until despair, caused by imbalance in his own seven principles, is followed by disease and death.

If we could bear in mind that the consciousness and substance within our being are the direct reflection of Deity, our passage through each incarnation would be characterized by harmony with our fellow beings and great nature. The light of consciousness would then increase in intensity, broadening the power to perceive in such a manner that the mind would be freed from all ignorance. But there is that which stands in the way of such clear seeing. "Mind, as we know it, is resolvable into states of consciousness, of varying duration, intensity, complexity, etc.,—all, in the ultimate, resting on sensation, which is again Maya" (*S.D.* I, 2 fn.).

To further comprehend the nature and use of conscious perceptive powers, one must understand the nature of Maya, or illusion. Although consciousness is the light of spirit, the mind is subject to misconception through the action of the senses. A passage dealing with the occult concept of time and the "Maya of phenomenal existence" (*S.D.* I, 44) is significant: "What is time, for instance, but the panoramic succession of our states of consciousness?" Further on we read, "One has to acquire *Paramartha* lest one should become too easy a prey to *Samvriti.*" This is clarified in a note: "One has to acquire true Self-Consciousness in order to understand *Samvriti,* or the 'origin of delusion'."

Even a cursory review of history will convince the student of occultism that the great teachers often come at periods when delusion is most powerful. Their mission has been to arrest the blind misuse of conscious life, and to open the eyes of the few so that the many may benefit as the ages pass. At one point the Christian era afforded a clear example of the power of delusion. Some truth was laid bare two thousand years ago by Jesus' life and teachings, but after the Constantinian period, when the persecution of the Christians had ceased and Christianity became the official religion, man's darkest period in history followed—its duration a thousand years. Even today we are hardly free from its paralyzing delusions. They

still blind man in his relation to nature and his fellows, and to his own divinity. The Master's teachings were inverted by ignorance and dogma, and thus "Maya" spread like heavy air-polution in the atmosphere of soul.

Instead of a search for the causes of delusion, a quest for greater and ever greater material power has characterized the modern period. This quest has already culminated in two disastrous world wars. But the quest persists unabated, metamorphosed under the name of science. Today we scarcely realize the unprecedented material evolution that science has brought to nations and the individual. But this trend, purporting to ameliorate the burdens of humanity and to unite the nations, has released the power in the atom, a power so great that one hardly dares speculate upon its ultimate application. The struggles of the past between nations fade into oblivion in contrast to what may come.

While intellect in its impetus toward material progress has experienced a phenomenal uprush, consciousness, the witness to the presence of spirit in man, has remained a slave to the senses. This drag in the culture of consciousness can be explained only by the realization that *manas* is not yet fully incarnated in the race; the reincarnating ego is not yet strong enough to overcome the delusion of matter and, from birth onward, consciousness is identified with the outer physical existence, the sense life taking precedence over that of spirit. Herein lies the cause of "Samvriti."

Let us again enter our metaphysical door. Behold our house of many rooms. These enclose our motives, our moods, our strivings and yearnings, our passions and desires—and our aspirations. And as we pass from room to room the degree of light varies from the gloom of the Tamas quality to Sattwa's clarity. If fortunate we may find that inner chamber where the light exceeds all others, where the deeds and thoughts of the higher ego return to the mind as gleanings from the spiritual acumen of past lives, inactive in the present perhaps, but retained as treasures stored in the egoic memory. While the light is still within us, let us look at a few more lines from *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 335 fn.): *"Ahamkara,* as universal Self-Consciousness, has a triple aspect, as also *Manas.* For this conception of I, or one's *Ego,* is either *Sattwa,* 'pure quietude,' or appears as *rajas,* 'active,' or remains *tamas,* 'stagnant,' in darkness. It belongs to Heaven and Earth, and assumes the properties of either."

Thus self-consciousness may be rendered weak or strong, dulled

by the personal sense-life, or strengthened by the clear-seeing of Egoic Consciousness. If not earth-bound, it may gain power in its "Heaven" of spiritual knowledge—not the heaven of the religious sects, but that state of consciousness which enables the individual to live with compassion toward all—a condition which encompasses both the life of spirit and that of the material existence. In this state, the mind and spiritual soul, united as a fully awakened ego, is no more the slave of its garment of flesh, but uses the body wisely in cooperation with Great Nature. Then the powers of perception grow stronger, and self-consciousness, in time, is joined with the Universal Consciousness, its source.

"Modern Awareness" and "Eternal Truth"

One must never forget that man is also an ancient being, long ago grown old, who has succeeded in understanding many of life's manifestations and values both wisely and truthfully. Through many temptations history has verified many truths. And we bring with us beside a "modern awareness" and "modern sensibility" a universal dialectic, an "eternal truth": our own common humanity. If we imperil that humanity, by not further shaping and enriching those "eternal" essences, then material progress will deliver up to humanity new unhappiness, hardship, and an increasing alienation. Fortunately, we have reason for optimism, since solutions really exist. . . . If the experiences of ancient history and traditional values cannot be applied in traditional ways to discovering the best solutions to our vital problems, our intellectual interest in them must be greater than it has ever been because of their very uniqueness, because of the "eternity" attained through time and change, and because of the need to retain that creative balance of values and ideas in time and space without which history cannot be created and the future cannot be anticipated. We need traditional values and experience from the past to guide the formation of moral conditions, without which it will be difficult to withstand temptations, especially those of wealth and power, which are growing unusually quickly and which of themselves do not make people happy.

—Dobrica Cosic (Bulletin of Atomic Scientists)

letters • questions • comment

Theosophy teaches that the power of discerning values, resident in the principle of Manas, is the true locus of will in human nature. Why, then, is Manas so easily made the servant of the egocentric aspects of personality—the selfish, combative passions and desires?

This inevitably-recurring question provides an opportunity for establishing the uniqueness of theosophical teachings regarding "natural" inclinations. The view of mind which has largely characterized Christian theology refers to one or another version of "original sin"—an almost ineradicable assumption being that the intelligence of the individual, if not checked by dire warnings concerning the consequences of wrongdoing, will be lustful and tyrannical. The goal, theologically speaking, is to overcome this soul-destroying fate by entering the Kingdom of Heaven after death.

Now this is a way of saying that something called the "soul" and the "mind" must be separated. The mind, which is inclined towards evil, is then presumably "left behind after death"; it has been identified with the image of Satan. Heaven is not a place for reflection and evolution, but the symbol of a release from the temptations and obligations of thought. This view, broadly speaking, defines a terminus of the mind and, because the mind is thought of as terminating, it can easily be characterized and defined.

The physicalist-materialist approach to an analysis of mind similarly proposes to reduce the mystery of self-generative thought by definition of thought's function in human evolution; thought becomes, though a tool of some subtlety, only an instrument in the interests of self-preservation and status advancement. The "lust for power" is accepted as fundamental to human nature, finding expression according to various societal conditions in wars of conquest, the acquisition of wealth and status, and in the gratification of an optimum of sensual pleasure. As in the case of the traditional theological view, the mind is therefore defined by fixed referents, and is not regarded as a quality or a power in and of itself.

The theosophical philosophy, whether expressed in the *Bhagavad-Gita,* in Platonic or Neo-Platonic writings, or in any thoughtful rein-

carnationist presentation, intimates that the mind of man cannot be defined by reference to anything else, for mind is not a "thing." The mystery of mind is, therefore, eternal, and will only be penetrated in degree by the individual when he exercises the power of evaluation and choice. The "selfish, combative passions and desires" represent the temptation to exploit the vast power of mind over physical and psychic realms.

So it is the aptitude of self-consciousness which is dual, and higher and lower manas do not represent two distinct entities, but rather an alternating attitude towards experience. It may be an oversimplification to say that, theosophically speaking, "mind is God," but this is the implication of H. P. Blavatsky's reference to the first use of the word "theosophy" by the Egyptians who antedated the Alexandrian Theosophists. The mind is an eternal mystery because it is both uncreate and ceaselessly creating. And since there is no terminal point for its pilgrimage and its possible heroic adventures, it cannot be explained by reference to inclinations which alternately hold sway. *Buddhi-manas* is omnipresent and eternal, a principle upon which the usual sort of speculation is impossible.

The "egocentric aspects of the personality" may, as in the psychological story of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* be educated to serve a transcendental conception of the meaning of human life. The liberated mind, the mind of the man who has truly entered the "kingdom of heaven," has achieved a willingness to forego any status quo of existence. Each definition of life's ultimate purposes must be revised, and, becoming free of the fear of "losing" inadequate self images, the "mind" of the individual finds ever wider and richer scope for activity.

These broad philosophical conclusions derive from any prolonged reflection upon the proposition that true individuality is gained "throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations." (*S.D.* I, 17.) Such reflection, moreover, provides a proper background for consideration of some central Indian Wisdom-Religion teachings regarding Yugas and Kalpas. Therein the ascent towards spiritually oriented consciousness is described as possible only after ages of confusing involvements of mind with materiality—a process represented in Hindu chronology by vast periods of time in which certain inclinations temporarily predominate.

In the section, "Cyclic Evolution and Karma" (*S.D.* I), H.P.B.

supplies a connective between cyclical philosophy and classical doctrine:

> Do those mysterious divisions of time, called Yugas and Kalpas by the Hindus, and so very graphically "cycle," ring or circle, by the Greeks, have any bearing upon, or any direct connection with, human life? There are "Cycles of matter" and there are "Cycles of Spiritual evolution." Racial, national, and individual cycles. May not esoteric speculation allow us a still deeper insight into the workings of these?
>
> As our planet revolves once every year around the sun, and at the same time turns once in every twenty-four hours upon its own axis, thus traversing minor circles within a larger one, so is the work of the smaller cyclic periods accomplished and recommenced, within the Great Saros.
>
> The revolution of the physical world, according to the ancient doctrine, is attended by a like revolution in the world of intellect —the spiritual evolution of the world proceeding in cycles, like the physical one.
>
> The great kingdoms and empires of the world, after reaching the culmination of their greatness, descend again, in accordance with the same law by which they ascend; till, having reached the lowest point, humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more, the height of its attainment being, by this law of ascending progression by cycles, somewhat higher than the point from which it had before descended. (p. 641.)
>
> When a man finds himself seemingly enwrapped completely under the empire of his destiny, it then either fixes him like the inert shell against the immovable rock, or carries him away like a feather in a whirlwind raised by his own actions. (p. 639.)
>
> It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence." This state will last till man's spiritual intuitions are fully opened, which will not happen before we fairly cast off our thick coats of matter; until we begin acting from *within,* instead of ever following impulses from *without;* namely, those produced by our physical senses and gross selfish body. (Pp. 643, 644.)

Contemporary speculations about the psychological significance of the Hindu yugas appear in many treatments of symbolism. An article titled "Vicissitudes of Creativity," by Professor Henry Murray of Harvard, for example, suggests that the purport of Hindu chronology carries the implication of man's present "spiritual adolescence." Dr. Murray writes:

In the phase of spiritual adolescence, authority is denied, decomposed, reduced; there may be deicide and regicide, justified by the glorification of uncorrupted human nature, human reason, and the *vox populi*, the fraternal peer group; or there may be greater insistence on freedom of personal thought, speech, and decision, the idealization of individuality, resulting in ever-greater heterogeneity, division, disunity, disorder. The time comes when "the center cannot hold, things fall apart"; Siva is predominant. This is the era of egocentrism, competitions of egocentrism, nihilism, and teen-age terrorisms, largely due to the fact that the spiritually adolescent parents have not given their offspring the needed experience and steady discipline of the phase of spiritual childhood at its best. In short, adolescents are not prepared for the responsibilities of individuality and temperate rebellion and in a state of chaos become susceptible to the dictatorial leadership and machinations of a Moloch, who brings them back as physiological adults to a secularized phase of spiritual childhood under the cloud of an inflexible and infallible doctrine.

Today, however, there are evidences, here and there, that people are approaching, with more knowledge and more insight than has been heretofore available, the phase of spiritual manhood and womanhood, the era of Brahma, with its mythology of creativity, fundamentally derived from that period of life when a man and woman participate in the formation of a dyad, of a home, of offspring, and of a new family culture. This spiritual phase, this symbolism, might be exemplified, it seems to me, on all levels; an embracement and re-union of the opposites; man and nature, male and female, conscious and unconscious, superego and id, reason and passion, rational and irrational, science and art, enjoyable means and enjoyable ends, upper class and lower class, West and East. Instead of thesis and antithesis, we may achieve synthesis at the center; creation for creation—let us say, *creativism*—rather than creation for a giant suicidal murder. It is in view of this barely possible ideal that I have subtitled this essay: *the fortunate change of creativity*.

This is certainly an arresting description of the conditions which will obtain for the majority of men before a transition is accomplished from "the man possessing a germ of mind to the man of mind complete."

CONCEPT AND CONDUCT

IN the karmic sweep of cycles the threads of human relationships shift and change—even in seeming solitude—since we exist on this plane only by reason of involvement with or through the interests of others. In times of crises these "threads" become tenuous, or perilously brittle. They may break or get hopelessly tangled, or—a critical time of testing passed—be strengthened, and a stamina gained that will be a reservoir of help in times to come.

This is true politically and socially today, as it was true in the history of the Theosophical Movement. A crisis—one of many—was reached in 1888, thirteen years after the formation of the Theosophical Society. From the world's point of view the achievements of the Society loomed large, but in the eyes of H.P.B. and her Teachers, concerned with the real needs of humanity in this ascending cycle of its evolution, those achievements spelled "failure." The First Object of the Society—to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood—was lost sight of, and the importance of magnetic rapport with the Founders of the Movement was ignored, or not understood.

There is no nobler Ideal than that expressed in the First Object. Even in a limited sense, the idea of brotherhood touches the heart; in the theosophical sense it makes the whole world kin—without distinctions of "race, creed, caste or color." The ideal may be rooted in reminiscence, memory of the Soul, or intuitive perception of the unbroken unity underlying the interdependence evident among beings of all kinds; or it may be a simple desire to participate in the lives of fellow-beings. It is at once appealing and disarming—since the concept of Brotherhood necessarily implies absence of intolerance, freedom from feelings of superiority or inferiority, grievances forgotten, selfish expectations laid aside, prejudices and preconceived notions cleared away. This, in whatever degree, is the true attitudinal approach to the Second Object of the Theosophical Society—the study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study. Whether consciously or unconsciously assumed, this is the position of the open mind, the eager intellect, the unveiled perception.

What results from such study? In the course of time, inevitably, the import of the Third Object is sensed. Freedom in thought and investigation allows personal preferences full play; clarification of ideas leads to discoveries of latent traits and tendencies in the personal nature; motives, if mixed, cloud discrimination; and judgments become smug and self-righteous, until, in the words of Robert Crosbie in *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (pp. 176-8):

> The fatal error is made again and again by mankind in the failure to recognize a divine teacher when he appears among them in human guise. Buddha, Jesus, and many others before and after them, were treated by their contemporaries as ordinary human beings actuated by similiar motives as the rest of mankind. They were opposed by the established interests, religious and otherwise, because the doctrines they taught were destructive of the hard and fast conclusions upon which those interests were founded; their speech and acts, although intended to instruct, enlighten, and benefit, were construed as violations of law and custom, and were frequently characterized as criminal in nature. Even among their immediate disciples, suspicions, doubt, jealousy, fear, resentment and self-interest were to be found, none of which could have had existence had the real nature of the teacher been understood. These conditions prevented the true relation between teacher and disciple which is so necessary to the latter if he would benefit fully from that relation. It is true that all the disciples learned something in spite of their defects, but it is also true that the lack of intuitive perception of the divine nature of their teacher was the most important factor in the failure of those disciples to truly transmit the teachings they had received; for that lack closed the door in themselves through which the divine enlightenment could come.

The Third Object of the Theosophical Society—the investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man—draws attention to the *simultaneous* evolution of man and Nature, to the importance of the laws governing the occult Universe, and to man's vital place in the universal scheme.

The three Objects are not therefore to be considered in the sequence of one-two-three but as supplementary steps and conditions: the First is the everlasting, impersonal Ideal *within* the framework of which all barriers to the realization of the true brotherhood of man are recognized; the Second is the means whereby those barriers are levelled through *understanding* the ideas that have moved mankind to action all down the ages; the Third relates to the awareness in each man of the way the first two Objects involve him

—in his whole being, in daily living; for the disciple life is not separate from the people and circumstances at hand. Conduct follows the line of concept but each action is "colored" or personalized by the reason for acting—the motive. In this sense each colors the "threads" of relationships. "There is no Karma unless there is a being to make it and to feel its effects," and when responsibility for the effects felt is admitted and accepted, motivating causes are conscious choices—living becomes individual rather than personal, and it is easier to see our fellow-men in terms of what they *are* and what they are in incarnation *for,* instead of the defects which their lives temporarily present.

Appearances are deceptive only to those who fail to understand human nature and the nature of the cycles. In words from the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "What is night to those who are unenlightened is as day to his gaze; what seems as day is known to him as night, the night of ignorance. Such is the Self-governed Sage!" So, in the ripeness of time they can prophesy what is in store for mankind, and predict with encouragement the fulfillment of man's possibilities, as William Q. Judge said: "In this cycle each man must become his own authority."And in 1888, H. P. Blavatsky wrote to Mr. Judge:

> Night before last I was shown a bird's-eye view of the Theosophical Societies. I saw a few earnest reliable Theosophists in a death struggle with the world in general, and with other—nominal but ambitious—Theosophists. The former are greater in number than you may think, and *they prevailed*, as you in America *will prevail*, if you only remain staunch to the Master's programme and true to yourselves.

In that same year, addressing Mr. Judge in *Five Messages* to the American Theosophists in Convention assembled, H.P.B. said:

> We were several, to call it [T.S.] to life in 1875. Since then you have remained alone to preserve that life through good and evil report. It is to you chiefly, if not entirely, that the Theosophical Society owes its existence in 1888. Let me then thank you for it, for the first and perhaps the last, time publicly, and from the bottom of my heart, which beats only for the cause you represent so well and serve so faithfully. I ask you also to remember that, on this important occasion, my voice is but the feeble echo of other more sacred voices, and the transmitter of the approval of Those whose presence is alive in more than one true Theosophical heart, and lives, as I know, pre-eminently in yours.

The *Five Messages* have an overtone of solemnity as they depict

the critical bearing of personal *mis*conception on the welfare of the Theosophical endeavor to present the true idea of Brotherhood. The *Messages* (the last one written a few weeks before H.P.B.'s death) are replete with warnings and suggestions and rich with promise, for rapport with the Movement depends on self-induced and self-devised efforts. It is not *what* is done, but the spirit in which it is done—the motive—that counts. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The Saviors of Humanity ask nothing for themselves; but identifying themselves with humanity, they say in essence: If you would serve us, *serve humanity* by killing in yourselves those separative bases that make for unbrotherly conduct.

H.P.B. said: "Follow not me nor my path, but the path I show."

"Morality of Evolution"

Man, by his very nature and of his own accord, strives toward self-realization, and his set of values evolves from such striving. He can grow, in the true sense, only if he assumes responsibility for himself.

We arrive thus at a *morality of evolution,* in which the criterion for what we cultivate or reject in ourselves lies in the question: is a particular attitude or drive inducive or obstructive to my human growth? All kinds of pressure can easily divert our constructive energies into unconstructive or destructive channels. But, with such a belief in an autonomous striving toward self-realization, we do not need an inner strait jacket with which to shackle our spontaneity, nor the whip of inner dictates to drive us to perfection. We do not need them because we see a better possibility of dealing with destructive forces in ourselves: that of actually *outgrowing* them. The way toward this goal is an ever increasing awareness and understanding of ourselves. Self-knowledge, then, is not an aim in itself, but a means of liberating the forces of spontaneous growth.

—Karen Horney

YOUTH FORUM

Frequent reference is made in the pages of THEOSOPHY *to the "hero-soul," or god, within every person; and there is much discussion about the work and the pain which this spiritual being is destined to experience. Yet it is very difficult for people to get a feeling of this Promethean aspect within—they never feel that strong. They don't seem to be heroes, let alone gods. What makes the hero-idea so important, and how does one realize that importance?*

It is difficult to imagine this question being asked in any other age than our own. We have unwound so much of the skein of false tradition that we no longer trust the inspiring myths of antiquity, nor are many of us prone to search for their possible meanings. The heroes of the past are strangers to us, the tales of them fanciful. Yet, our *own* myths, built on the ideas of progress, science, and technology are dwarfed by the depictions of the cosmos embraced in earlier epochs.

The heroic achievements of both past and present are reflections of who we think we are and what we think we are capable of achieving. Our gods are very real. Every day the pantheons of insurance buildings get taller, the lunar rockets grow more powerful, and the threat of Ragnarok gets closer at hand—it is only a question whether a new earth will arise from the germicides and nuclear bombs of that last great conflict.

Of course, there have been worth-while conquests from our efforts. Just breaking the fetters of established religion was a task of heroic dimensions, and already several generations have passed without need for a defense of secular against religious ideals.

But a sense of reality different from ours was created and sustained in the drama of ancient myth and legend. These tales contain both history and the outlines of future history. The hero's story needed no explanation, because it formed the idiom of a living cosmic tradition. Even with his godly power, he had a hard core of physical reality about him; and for all his other-worldliness, he was first a man in the eyes of his followers. Thor, Horus, Arjuna,

Gautama, Prometheus—each had the pain of being born, of growing, and of confronting a world concerned with keeping unchanged the established order of things. Each rebelled against that order, choosing the condemnation and wrath of Heaven rather than forego his determination for freedom and self-reliance. Three familiar lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost* give the synthesis of this feeling. The "Fallen One" in Hell says:

> Here we may reign secure; as in my choice,
> To reign is worth ambition, though in hell!
> Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. . . .

The hero was only a part of the entire myth; his meaning and significance were mixed in his role as an innovator of change and as a character fulfilling the demands of some larger destiny. A complete myth included everything in its personifications, yet the ultimate explanations of existence remained sublime and mysterious.

In the West, Plato secured the place of myth as a viable form of philosophical exposition. Following Socrates' practice, J. A. Stewart remarks in *The Myths of Plato* that Plato's written philosophy took the form of drama in which "the arguments themselves were characters." But more significant is his reason why myth (which also includes the hero) is so important:

> If it prepares the way for the exercise of the scientific understanding, it also indicates limits within which that exercise must be confined. This it does by supplying an emotional context, if the phrase may be used, along with the fantastical context. The visions of the mythopoeic fancy are received by the Self of ordinary consciousness with a strange surmise of the existence, in another world, of another Self which, while it reveals itself in these visions, has a deep secret which it will not disclose. It is good that a man should thus be made to feel in his heart how small a part of him his head is—that the Scientific Understanding should be reminded that it is not the reason—the Part, that it is not the Whole Man. Herein chiefly lies the present value of Myth (or its equivalent, Poetry, Music, or whatever else) for civilised man.

Recapturing the authentic feeling that men of the past had about their legendary heroes remains difficult for us. Our vicarious participation through literature is only a partial involvement which, when refined by Western scholarship, becomes an accumulation of facts, names, and genealogies of Gods. This is an inversion of the place of myth.

(*To be continued*)

THE AGELESS SELF

WHERE there is no struggle, there is no merit. Each Entity must have won for itself the right of becoming divine, through self-experience. The whole of antiquity was imbued with that philosophy which teaches the involution of spirit into matter, the progressive, downward cyclic descent, or active, self-conscious evolution. To become a Self-conscious Spirit, the latter must pass through every cycle of being, culminating in its highest point on earth in Man. Spirit per se is an unconscious negative ABSTRACTION. Its purity is inherent, not acquired by merit; hence to become the highest Dhyan Chohan it is necessary for each Ego to attain to full self-consciousness as a human, i.e., conscious Being, which is synthesized for us in Man.

The absence of self-consciousness and intellect will make of a man an idiot, a brute in human form. Man, philosophically considered, is, in his outward form, simply an animal, hardly more perfect than his pithecoid-like ancestor of the third round. He is a living body, not a living being, since the realization of existence, the "Ego-Sum," necessitates self-consciousness, and an animal can have only direct consciousness, or instinct.

Each class of Creators endows man with what it has to give: the one builds his external form; the other gives him its essence, which later on becomes the Human *Higher Self* owing to the *personal exertions of the individual.* The first creators were the Pygmalions of primeval man: they failed to animate the statue—intellectually. The "Fathers," the lower Angels, are all Nature Spirits and the higher Elementals also possess an intelligence of their own; but this is not enough to construct a THINKING man. *"Living* Fire" was needed, that fire which gives to the human mind its self-perception and self-consciousness, or *Manas.* Had not the "sons of Mahat," speaking allegorically, skipped the intermediate worlds, in their impulse toward intellectual freedom, the animal man would never have been able to reach upward from this earth, and attain through self-exertion his ultimate goal.

NOTE.—A student's collation from the writings of H. P. Blavatsky.

The Host that incarnated in a portion of humanity, though led to it by Karma or Nemesis, preferred free-will to passive slavery, intellectual self-conscious pain and even torture—"while myriad time shall flow"—to inane, imbecile, instinctual beatitude. But while saving man from mental darkness, they inflicted upon him the tortures of the self-consciousness of his responsibility—the result of his free will—besides every ill which mortal man and flesh is heir to. Esoteric philosophy teaches that *one third* of the Dhyanis—i.e., the three classes of the *Arupa Pitris,* endowed with intelligence, "which is a formless breath, composed of intellectual not elementary substances"—was simply doomed by the law of Karma and evolution to be reborn (or reincarnated) on Earth. Some of these were *Nirmanakayas* from other Manvantaras.

In the esoteric teaching, the Kumaras are the progenitors of the true spiritual SELF in the physical man—the higher Prajapati, while the Pitris, or lower Prajapati, are no more than the *fathers* of the model, or type of his physical form, made "in their image." The human *Ego* is neither Atman nor Buddhi, but the higher *Manas*: the intellectual fruition and the efflorescence of the intellectual self-conscious *Egotism*—in the higher spiritual sense. The ancient works referred to it as *Karana Sarira* on the plane of *Sutratma,* which is the golden thread on which, like beads, the various personalities are strung.

The seventh principle (*purusha*) alone is the divine SELF, strictly speaking; for, as said in Manu, "He (Brahma) having pervaded the subtile parts of those six of unmeasured brightness," created or called them forth to "Self"-consciousness or the consciousness of that One SELF. The *Self* is what we call Atma, and thus constitutes the seventh principle, the synthesis of the "six." Kwan-Shi-Yin, literally interpreted, means "the Lord that is seen," and in one sense, "the divine SELF perceived by the Self" (the human)—the Atman or seventh principle merged in the Universal, perceived by, or the object of perception to, Buddhi, the sixth principle or divine Soul in man. The Atman or Spirit (the Spiritual SELF) passing like a thread through the five subtile bodies (or principles, *Koshas*) is called "thread-soul," or *Sutratman* in Vedantic philosophy. In the Spirit or Atma, *all* forms of life and death are found at once, and he who is at one with the Atma knows the whole manifested Universe at once.

Atma alone is the one real and eternal substratum of all—the

essence and absolute knowledge—the *Kshetragna.* It is called in the Esoteric philosophy "the One Witness," and, while it rests in Devachan, is referred to as "the Three Witnesses to Karma." "There is a certain eternal Self, on which the consciousness of selfhood rests; this is the witness of the three fields of consciousness." One has to acquire true Self-consciousness in order to understand the "origin of delusion." Only the liberated Spirit is able to faintly realize the nature of the source whence it sprung and whither it must eventually return.

It is not in the course of natural law that man should become a *perfect* septenary being, before the seventh race in the seventh round. Yet he has all these principles latent in him from his birth. Nor is it part of the evolutionary law that the Fifth principle (*Manas*), should receive its complete development before the *Fifth* Round.

Cosmic Ideation focussed in a principle or *upadhi* (basis) results as the consciousness of the individual Ego. The principle of our inner nature which develops in us into the Spiritual Ego—the Higher Self—is formed of the indissoluble union of *Buddhi* (the sixth) and the spiritual efflorescence of *Manas,* the fifth principle. It is not correct to refer to Christ—as some theosophists do—as the sixth principle in man—*Buddhi.* The latter per se is a passive and latent principle, the spiritual vehicle of Atman, inseparable from the manifested Universal Soul. It is only in union and in conjunction with Self-consciousness that *Buddhi* becomes the Higher Self and the divine, discriminating Soul. Christos is the seventh principle, if anything. The two higher principles *can have no individuality on Earth,* cannot be man, unless there is (a) the Mind, or *Manas*-Ego, to cognize itself, and (b) the terrestrial *false* personality, or the body of egotistical desires and personal Will, to cement the whole, as if round a pivot (which it is, truly), to the physical form of man.

"Manas is dual—*lunar* in its lower, solar in its upper portion," says a commentary. That is to say, it is attracted in its higher aspect towards Buddhi, and in its lower descends into, and listens to the voice of its *animal* soul full of selfish and sensual desires; and herein is contained the mystery of an adept's as of a profane man's life, as also that of the *post-mortem* separation of the divine from the animal man. There is no plane in the whole universe with a wider margin, or a wider field of action in its almost endless gradations of perceptive and apperceptive qualities, than the plane of Mentality, which has in its turn an appropriate smaller plane for every "form," from

the "mineral" monad up to the time when that monad blossoms forth by evolution into the DIVINE MONAD.

When the Rabbi Jesus was requested (in *Pistis Sophia*) by his disciples to reveal to them, "the mysteries of the Light of thy [his] Father" (i.e., of the higher SELF enlightened by Initiation and Divine knowledge), Jesus answers: "Do ye seek after these mysteries? No mystery is more excellent than they which shall bring your souls unto the Light of Lights, unto the place of Truth and Goodness, unto the place where there is neither male nor female, neither form in that place but Light, everlasting, not to be uttered. . . ."

It is only by the SELF emancipating itself from the (seven) causes of illusion that one acquires the knowledge (secret wisdom) of the qualities of objects of sense, on their dual plane of manifestation—the visible and the invisible. "The learned do not suppose their *senses* to have aught to do with them, any more than with their SELF." (*Anugita.*) "Man can neither propitiate nor command the *Devas,"* it is said. But, by paralyzing his lower personality, and arriving thereby at the full knowlege of the *non-separateness* of his higher SELF from the One absolute SELF, man can, even during his terrestrial life, become as "One of Us." Unless the Ego takes refuge in the Atman, the ALL-SPIRIT, and merges entirely into the essence thereof, the personal Ego may goad it to the bitter end.

"That Eternal, which is free from birth and growth and change, waning and sickness and death, everlasting, the cause that puts forth, upholds, destroys the world, 'That thou art'; bring it to consciousness in thy Self." (*Vivekachudamani.*)

THE ETERNAL PRINCIPLE

There is an eternal Principle or Substance which is truly the man and no accident derived from Composition. This is the Deity, the hero, the particular God, the intelligence in, from, and through whom different complexes and bodies are formed and form themselves, so that it continually reappears in different species, names, and fortunes.

—GIORDANO BRUNO

on the lookout

Transformations Within the Christian World

The late Paul Tillich's "ultimate concern" with removing from Christian thought the deadening effect of church dogmas has had far-reaching effects. The crystallization of the inspirations communicated by Jesus, as Tillich repeatedly showed, results in inversions of original meaning. Instead of finding the "spirit of Christ" in *individual* commitment and dedication, the tendency of church Christians has been to hope for personal grace by idolatry of Christ as a supernatural figure. When this happens to any religion, as Joseph Campbell says: "the life goes out of it, temples become museums, and the link is dissolved. Such a blight has certainly descended on the Bible and on a great part of the Christian cult."

In Tillich's view, St. Paul derived one clear inspiration from the teachings of Jesus—that the disciple could never ennoble the word "Christian" by conforming to stylized belief. One of Tillich's most notable sermons, "Do Not Be Conformed," was based on a text from Romans 12:2a, which reads: "Do not be conformed to this eon, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Tillich goes on to say: "There is *one* all-embracing thing to which the apostle does not want us to be conformed—this eon. Instead of being conformed to this eon he wants us to be transformed by the coming eon, the state of renewal of our world and of ourselves. Not conformity, but transformation—that is what Paul says in the words of our text."

The Inspiration must be Radical

Tillich himself embodied the conviction that a true Christian must resist the temptation to seek security in the church as an institution. In "Do Not Be Conformed," he continues:

> The picture of extreme non-conformity that Jesus paints includes all the small acts of non-conformity that we must perform in our daily life. Do not be conformed to the society group to which you belong. Do not be conformed to those who have political power over you, even if you obey them. But work for their transformation.

> Many churchmen would perhaps agree with this. But they would resist, if one applied the warning of the apostle to the church itself. But we must do so. The conformism that threatened Jesus most effectively and brought him to death was the religious conformism of his time. And the situation was and is not different in the church. For the Christian churches also belong to this eon, although they witness to the coming eon and represent the coming eon in time and space. They share in the corruption of this eon, its mixture of good and evil. And their history is a continuous witness to their corruption. Therefore, Paul's warning against being conformed is also valid for the church.

Psychic and Noëtic Christianity

The implications of the resistance of Jesus to externalized morality, expressed in his references to "the Father within" and by his rejection of codified ideas of good and evil, have been neatly avoided by most organizers of Christianity, Protestant as well as Catholic. In Webster's definition of religion we find evidences of the always-prevailing tendency to identify religion with authority and ceremony. One may note, for example, such defining phrases as these (italics ours): "the service and adoration of God or a god as expressed in *forms* of worship; one of the *systems* of faith and worship." A further expression, "the will to obey," is similarly significant. These conceptions clearly point to the identification of a religious system with the psychic nature of man, which expresses itself in established habits of thought—providing an excuse for the avoidance of individual truth-seeking. In other words, while Jesus strove to awaken the noëtic mind, the only true agent of transformation, the identification of the word "Christian" with static institutions has had precisely the opposite effect. "Belonging" to the church has been a substitute, and a delusive one, for the understanding and practice of Christ's teachings.

Another Dimension of Non-Conformism

Certain present-day theologians, however, have been impelled by conscience to an evaluation of this situation. Karl Barth, for instance, has pointed to the dangers of the conformism which identifies Christianity *with* institutions, rather than as the spirit which insists upon their continual transformation. In Barth's view, when politics and religion become commingled, religion is invariably corrupted. In protesting the identification of Christianity with "the war

against communism," Barth shows both his comprehension of the philosophy of Karma and the need to resist the institutional categories of good and evil; it was resisting, Christ said, which could lead to that state of mind called "the kingdom of heaven."

Dr. Barth's "No Angels of Darkness and Light," printed in *Contemporary Moral Issues* (a 1963 university text), contains this passage:

> Can one overlook the fact that communism is the unwelcomed yet—in all its belligerence—natural result of Western developments? Has not its total, inhuman compulsion which we complain of so much haunted from remotest times in another form our avowedly free Western societies and states? Further, could we really intend to help the peoples governed by communism and the world threatened by it, or even one individual among those suffering under its effects, by proclaiming and seeking to practice toward it a relationship exclusively that of enemies? Have we forgotten that what is at stake in this "absolute enemy" relationship, to which every brave man in the West is now obligated and for which he would give his all, is a typical invention of (and a heritage from) our defunct dictators—and that only the "Hitler in us" can be an anti-communist on principle?

Challenges that Reach the Laity

A few months ago (July 27, 1965), T. George Harris, senior editor of *Look,* showed that the "ultimate concerns" of Tillich and Barth have paralleled a general feeling of inadequacy in modern Christianity. In an article, "The Battle of the Bible," Mr. Harris writes:

> You feel religious restlessness everywhere you go. The big denominations, long placid, are suddenly possessed by turmoil. Pope Paul needs all his authority to control, or try to, the revolution in Roman Catholicism. But Protestantism, with no central machinery, is rocked even more violently by the same historic disturbance.
>
> Many Protestant leaders believe that the church will not survive as it is. Holding itself aloof, they say, it no longer reaches deep into the human situation. Radical young theologians want to abandon the word "God" because church-going millions use it as a nickname for superstition. Conservatives, shocked, fear that the "new theology" degrades Christ to a "myth." Result: a full-scale battle of the Bible over the purpose of the church and the living test of truth.
>
> Timid pastors have come down from their safe pulpits to march with Negroes. . . . Publishers are bringing out abrasive books, instead of the old religious tranquilizers. "There is," says

> a G.E. executive, "an intellectual underground in religion." . . . Every form of religious activity—and some not seen before—has become intense. . . . The happenings, too varied to fit anybody's doctrine, have spread far beyond the churches. . . . Is this just another "revival"? Will a wave of TV tentmen drive millions more to church? Not likely. The crisis runs deeper. It is nothing less, activists say, than the dawn of a new Reformation.

Christianity Without God

Mr. Harris notes that "quite a lot has been going on among theologians without the news spreading down to the pew," adding: "Many a minister has looked out over his congregation and wondered how much he dare tell them about the conflict between their religion and his." Meanwhile, certain radical non-theist theologians believe it is futile for man to seek a God beyond himself. These well-publicized polemicists who speak of the "death of God" include Thomas J. J. Altizer of Emory University in Atlanta, William H. Hamilton of the Colgate Rochester Divinity School, and Paul Van Buren of Temple University in Philadelphia. Only a few books embodying this view have appeared, and the movement has so far progressed mainly through articles and personal correspondence, but there is talk of establishing a journal dedicated to radical theologies. The New York *Times* (Oct. 17) reports:

> The 19th-century German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche shocked the philosophical world with his famous cry, "God is dead." Today that same cry is being heard in theological circles as well. . . . [The "death of God" theologians] say that the word "God" is meaningless and that even if there once was a God, He no longer speaks to man. True Christianity, they say, is an affirmation of the secular world in the style of the man Jesus, and has no relation to traditional church practices such as worship, the sacraments and prayer. . . .
>
> Dr. Hamilton spelled out this theme in a recent article in *The Christian Scholar*: "It used to be possible to say: 'We cannot know God but He has made himself known to us,' and at that point analogies from the world of personal relations would enter the scene and help us out. But somehow, the situation has deteriorated: as before, we cannot know, but now it seems that He does not make himself known, even as enemy."

Humanism versus Metaphysics

The *Times* quotes Dr. Van Buren (*The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*): "In almost every field of human learning, the metaphysical

and cosmological aspect has disappeared and the subject matter has been 'limited' to the human, the historical, the empirical. Theology cannot escape this tendency if it is to be a serious mode of contemporary thought, and such a 'reduction' of content need no more be regretted in theology than in astronomy, chemistry or painting." With talk of anything transcendent ruled out, Dr. Van Buren builds an ethical faith around Jesus of Nazareth. A leading critic of the new theologies, the Rev. Dr. Langdon Gilkey, of the University of Chicago Divinity School, calls the radical ideas "the most fundamental possible break with the long tradition of Christian theological discourse." The *Times* article adds:

> Many theologians who challenge the conclusions of the radical theologies nevertheless admit that they must be taken seriously. . . . Orthodox thinkers find the radical theologians helpful in focusing theological thought on questions inadequately answered by the 19th century. . . . "Now that mankind is learning to live with the bomb and developing some self-confidence, it is the unanswered 19th-century questions about the existence of God . . . that are important," said one theologian. "The new theologies, if inadequate as systems, have at least focused on the right questions."

The Age of Inquiry

"In many ways the most radical of the new theologians is Dr. Altizer," remarks the *Times* writer. "His approach is neither ethical nor analytical, but mystical. He rejects not only the Christian tradition but much of the Western culture to explore Eastern and primitive religious phenomena." If Eastern religions are seriously explored, the door to metaphysics will necessarily be reopened, and it will be discovered that maturer religions than Christianity have ideas on deity that are relevant for man at levels of development. "THAT thou art," is the ceaseless refrain of the Upanishads. Or as Krishna, the Supreme SELF, is symbolized as affirming in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "I am the ego seated in the hearts of all beings."

The startling and widespread influence of the little volume, *Honest to God*, by John Robinson, Anglican Bishop of Woolwich, has helped many of the Christian laity toward these realizations. Bishop Robinson predicts a welcome end to theism—the superstitious idea of a God "up there" in a literal sense, and also the idea of a *supernatural* deity. God, for this English Bishop, is a symbol of meaning only insofar as it stands for the existence of a "beyond" in the midst and depth of life. This is what Robinson means when he claims that

escape from theism is the only way "to validate the idea of transcendence for modern man."

More on "Honest to God"

Representative reviews and analyses of this book—which had seven printings in 1963 alone—continue to appear. In the New York *Times Book Review* (June 23, 1965), Geddes Macgregor remarks:

> That this little book, a plea for a radical revision in Christian thought, should have been already a best seller or *succès fou* in England is less remarkable than that it should be by a former Cambridge don who, raised to the Anglican episcopate in 1959 at the age of 40, was even before then known in theological circles as the author of several *succès d'estime,* and has since then evoked archiepiscopal disapproval.

An article in England's *Hibbert Journal* (Summer, 1964), "The Ideas Behind *Honest to God,*" by F. McEachran, emphasizes Robinson's refreshing approach to the meaning of the life of Jesus, remarking that "the Bishop of Woolwich presents a Christology which has a genuine appeal, but which is difficult to reconcile with traditional orthodoxy." Bernard E. Meland, professor of Theology at the Divinity School, University of Chicago, has this to say in *Religion in Life* (Winter 1963-64):

> With the spirit and intention of *Honest to God* I am wholeheartedly in sympathy. It is like a fresh, brisk wind blowing through musty church sanctuaries, bringing not only a long-delayed deodorant into smug and smelly places but an invigorating supply of oxygen that could well enable their closed communions to breathe again.
>
> Bishop Robinson has brought his honest talk out into the open. With what must seem to some of his colleagues and parishioners shameful candor he has laid bare the recalcitrant thoughts that undoubtedly have plagued him throughout his ministry. That one so high in the hierarchy of the English Church should speak this way must come as a shock to complacent Christians at home and abroad.

Conscience—Intellectual and Cultural

In summation, Prof. Meland speaks of the role of the Bishop of Woolwich as a catalytic agent:

> The blunt speaking among younger clergymen and theologians today about our having entered upon a post-Christian era reveals that the initiative in dealing with questions affecting the

destiny of modern man has been seized by those outside the churches. Hence, the way in which many clergymen and Christian theologians timorously ask the question, "Has the church a concern with culture?" makes the question itself appear idle and hollow if, in fact, not actually stupid. So think many of our younger clergy and theologians. Insofar as the church has any reality at all in the modern world for them, it is this critical, anguished, suffering concern with the crisis of humanity in the world revolution, and the encounter with others in the pursuit of this concern.

In a way, for the advocate of "religionless Christianity," the center of gravity has moved out of the formal church service to the critical encounter with human beings in pursuit of this concern. Bishop Robinson but echoes the comments of many others of this persuasion who speak of the church-in-the-world, by way of countering the notion so common to religious thinking that the spiritual act is an act of withdrawal, a going apart from the turmoil of the world.

"Belief and Unbelief"

All this is a way of saying that if the symbol *God* is to be viable in our time, it must be *made* viable. To say that one may not question the idea of deity with one's intelligence is to deny this possibility. A recent review of Michael Novak's *Belief and Unbelief* (Macmillan, 1965) develops the implications of a growing point of view. Discussing Novak's work in the Los Angeles *Times* for last Nov. 14, Louis Cassels puts it this way:

Is it possible to believe in God on purely intellectual grounds?

Many theologians would say no. Religious thought today is dominated by the assumption that God is beyond the reach of human intelligence and can be known only as He takes the initiative in revealing Himself.

Novak argues that man can arrive at belief in God without making a "leap of faith" and without depending on the authority of any religious revelation, simply by reflecting upon his own experience and identity.

Looking inward at his own deepest nature, Novak says man finds himself gripped by "a drive to understand," a basic hunger to make sense out of the world in which he lives.

This drive to understand is unlimited. It is not satisfied with explanations of the way things work in the physical universe. Nor does it stop with asking how the universe came into being. It wants to know, ultimately, "Why should anything exist at all?"

Behind the quest for understanding, Novak says, is a deep human intuition that what is real must be intelligible. He con-

tends the thoughtful man is led to believe in God as the "source of the intelligible."

Mr. Cassels quotes Professor Novak:

> It does not make sense to say that the real just happens, for then the real is radically unintelligible.
>
> If . . . there is not a God, then the intelligible just happens; it is of itself unintelligible. And the fact that men can make realistic judgments, both in their knowing and in their doing, is an oddity. It does not seem plausible that man's intelligence has no intelligible relation to the real, that it struggles for effectiveness in a world that is not susceptible of being dealt with by intelligence.

From a "Christian Century" Editorial

In commenting (Dec. 1, 1965) on several of the trends just discussed—especially on the "no god" idea—the *Century's* editor remarks:

> What had long been contended in secret is now shouted from housetops. A number of young men who call themselves death-of-God theologians or "Christian atheists" had for a time stated their cases in those relatively secret and secure corners of universities called divinity schools, in those serene pockets of academia called seminaries and on the pages of staid theological journals or of religious magazines, including this one. So long as theologian talked to theologian no one seemed very much concerned. But now through the ministrations of the *New York Times, Time* magazine, the *New Yorker,* thousands of pulpits and hundreds of newspaper editorials, the general public has been made aware of these men. Debate now rages: it looks as if we shall have a long, hot winter.
>
> The "death-of-God boys"—as they are often patronizingly referred to—are mishandling the issues, but no one should question the appropriateness or seriousness of the issues they raise: we would want the issues tested not by inquisition or ordeal but by empathic and reasoned reply. But whether God lives is not an issue that can be settled by the *Times* or *Time* or the *New Yorker* or by livid patrons of universities or pewsitters acquainted with no part of the issue except the headlines. Nor can it be settled ultimately by theologians. But witness to the living God has always been clearest and most courageous in the face of opposition and challenge, whether from within or without the circle of those called by the name of Jesus Christ.

Existentialist Influence on Christian Liberalism

The widespread influence of that great first "Christian existentialist," Soren Kierkegaard, has had much to do with the rethinking

of conventional theological formulations. Meanwhile some writers, such as Heinrich Zimmer and Joseph Campbell, have stressed the profound psychological meaning of religious myths. Such developments are in the direction of H. P. Blavatsky's approach in *Isis Unveiled,* indicating why the great myths which depict the drama of the human soul were never meant to be taken literally as matters of history, and contain a meaning viable for every age. (Of course, the theosophical student is also aware that many myths explained by H.P.B. *are* allusions to actual historical events relating to the early races of mankind.) But, for many Christian thinkers who feel a compelling urge to make the structure of their theology intelligible, the "myths" of Christianity take on deeper spiritual meaning when dissociated from supposedly miraculous happenings.

D. L. Thrapp in the Los Angeles *Times* (Oct. 31, 1965) reviews the effects of the influence of the existentialist theologian, Dr. Rudolf Karl Bultmann. Now approaching the age of eighty-one, Dr. Bultmann has been a focal point of controversy for some twenty-five years—with the tide turning in favor of his insistence that biblical myths should not be taken literally. Beginning with the remark that "Christ is correctly preached not where something is said about him, but only where he himself becomes the proclaimer," Dr. Bultmann points out that Christ did not concern himself with matters of "history." He maintains that Christians should face the fact that virtually nothing can be known about Jesus as a historical personage.

De-mythologized Gospel

Summarizing Bultmann's influence, Mr. Thrapp says:

> Bultmann believes it is impossible to accept the Gospel as historically reliable. He feels that virtually nothing can be known about Jesus as an historical personage.
>
> The saving gospel is contained in the gospel accounts, he believes, but in a dress designed for an ancient audience, not for today's man.
>
> Thus he considers as mythological the virgin birth, all the miracles, including the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the atoning Cross, the empty tomb, the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus Christ and the second coming.
>
> All these things, and others, must be stripped of the [supernatural beliefs] that enshroud them, in order to get at the core of their meaning for the benefit of modern man, Bultmann holds.

"The Resurrection itself is not an event of past history," Bultmann wrote.

To Bultmann, the Virgin birth legend means that God comes through Jesus of Nazareth. The death of Christ means that life is redeemed only when by faith one dies to self and to the world. The Resurrection means that the Cross deprives one's own death of its power over one.

Inquiry Theosophizes—a Clear Example

It is in this context that one may consider the discussions of reincarnation and karma which continually appear in the writings of the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, who has been called "England's most popular preacher." Dr. Weatherhead, a "maverick Methodist," demonstrates that the philosophy of reincarnation is not incompatible with Christ's teaching. In his newest book, *The Christian Agnostic,* he says of Reincarnation:

It shocks some people even to contemplate such a possibility, but it seems a very reasonable, even if unprovable, idea to me. And it would be unspeakable arrogance on the part of us in the West to dismiss without examination an idea current since the sixth century B.C., and held tenaciously by about 500 million people, many of whom are deep thinkers, saints, mystics and profound scholars.

My own conclusion is not that reincarnation is proved, or that it is an essential part of Christian belief, but I do find that the evidence makes it probable, that Jesus never denied it, that there is nothing in it which is out of harmony with his teaching, and that it was probably part of the thought-structure of all the contemporary minds of his day. One prominent sect, the Essenes, definitely taught it, and Josephus makes reference to it as if it were commonly accepted. He writes, "They say that all souls are incorruptible but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies."

It is important, as we examine the idea of reincarnation, to realize the immense support for what I have written above which is provided by the fact that it was accepted by the early church for the first 500 years of its existence. Only in A.D. 543 did the Council of Constantinople reject it and only then by a narrow majority. If some view of reincarnation had not been widely held in the early church it would have been pointless to discuss it in a church council.

An important question to ask is whether the idea of reincarnation helps us answer some questions all thoughtful Christians ask, without denying any great Christian affirmations. My own view is that reincarnation offers a key to unlock many problems. (*The United Church Observer,* Toronto, Nov. 1, 1965.)

The Question of Justice

Dr. Weatherhead concludes his article:

> Now if we take this life as we often see it, how terribly unfair and unjust it seems. I have known people who, humanly speaking, have never had a chance, born with defects that appear to mar their lives, or else have met with a whole series of misfortunes that shut them off from the happiness others know.
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> Is human distress just luck, then? If so, how unjust is life! Is it God's will? Then how unlike any human father he must be, for a human father who thus exerted his will would be clapped into jail, or into a lunatic asylum.
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> But if we accept the idea that all these inequalities are the result—in a cosmos of cause and effect—of earlier causes, the product of some distant past, the fruit of earlier choices, then our sense of justice is preserved. The body then, though born distorted, is not a greater mystery than the mangled body at the foot of a cliff, mangled because its owner did not look where he was going. We often *do* see suffering which is clearly the result of *recent* folly or ignorance or sin. None of these, but, indeed, their opposites, are the "will of God," viz., wisdom, knowledge and holiness. What if *all* apparently unjust suffering is the result of either recent or older folly, ignorance and sin? "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" may be indeed a law that runs back for the sowing to lives before this and for the reaping to lives after this.

In the light of all the foregoing, a prophecy recorded over seventy years ago in *The Ocean of Theosophy* (p. 10) may be on the eve of partial fulfillment:

> As Mind is being evolved more and more as we proceed in our course along the line of the race development, there can be perceived underneath in all countries the beginning of the transition from the animal possessed of the germ of real mind to the man of mind complete. This day is therefore known to the Masters...as the "transition period." The theosophist sees all around him the evidence that the race mind is changing by enlargement, that the old days of dogmatism are gone and the "age of inquiry" has come, that the inquiries will grow louder year by year and the answers be required to satisfy the mind as it grows more and more, until at last, all dogmatism being ended, the race will be ready to face all problems, each man for himself, all working for the good of the whole, and that the end will be the perfecting of those who struggle to overcome the brute.